DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 482 866 PS 031 705

AUTHOR	Martin, Carolyn; Wallace, Jennifer; Bell, Andrew
TITLE	Awards in Early Education, Childcare and Playwork: A Qualifications Framework for the Future. Insight.
INSTITUTION	Scottish Executive Education Dept., Edinburgh.
REPORT NO	No-10
ISSN	ISSN-1478-6788
PUB DATE	2003-11-00
NOTE	14p.; The online ISSN version is ISSN-1478-6796.
AVAILABLE FROM	Dissemination Officer, Research, Economic and Corporate Strategy Unit, Scottish Executive Education Department, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ, Scotland, United Kingdom. Tel: 0131-244-0092; Fax: 0131-244-5581; Web site: http://www.scotland.gov.uk. For full text: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/insight.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Caregiver Attitudes; Caregiver Training; *Child Care; *Child Care Quality; *Child Caregivers; Comparative Analysis; *Early Childhood Education; Foreign Countries; *National Standards; Paraprofessional Personnel; Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	*Caregiver Qualifications; *Scotland

ABSTRACT

This study examined the extent to which existing awards and qualifications for the paraprofessional workforce in Scottish early education and care are appropriate to the needs of the sector as it responds to increasing regulation and concerns about quality. The study considered whether the qualifications provided a clear framework, how the qualifications are understood and accepted by employers and students, and the extent to which qualifications meet the requirement to support integrated service delivery. Information was collected through surveys and interviews with training providers, child care providers, current students, and key stakeholders. A relational database was constructed to compare the content of 13 current awards in early education, child care, and playwork to 15 topics drawn from an analysis of the standards and quality indicators in The National Care Standards and The Child at the Centre (a guide to self-evaluation for early years workers). Findings revealed that the mandatory components of the 13 awards offered common content across only 2 of the 15 topics: (1) organization of children and young people's play and learning; and (2) safety. Despite variations, there was a core purpose common to the awards, centering on working with children, safety, and professional relationships. Training providers and key stakeholders felt that child care providers had a very poor understanding of the qualifications framework. Although many interviewees felt that the theoretical aspects of awards equipped people to deal with the practical elements of the work, child care providers were concerned with increasing the practical elements of the awards. Although informal links between training providers and employers were plentiful, they did not represent the full range of employers involved in the sector. Child care providers and students were not fully familiar with the Care Standards. Interviewees made suggestions for improving the content of

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

training to better meet future needs of the early care and education sector. (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE
Education Department

Insight 10

ED 482 866

Awards in Early Education, Childcare and Playwork: A Qualifications Framework for the Future

ES 031705

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Colin Affleck
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Welcome to *Insight*

Insight is a publication of the Research, Economic and Corporate Strategy (RECS) Unit, one of four units in the Information, Analysis and Communication Division, which is responsible for providing analytical services within the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). RECS is a multidisciplinary unit (consisting of researchers and economists) which undertakes and funds economic analysis and social research in the fields of: school education; children, young people and social work; architecture; and tourism, culture and sport.

The Scottish Executive is committed to the use of sound evidence in the development of policy and practice as well as in the evaluation of policy and its implementation. We therefore want to disseminate the results of research that SEED has undertaken and funded, in a manner that is accessible, interesting and attractive.

Insight aims to present the essence of research projects in a format that will be useful and informative for practitioners, policy makers, parents, academics, and anyone else who has an interest in economic and social research in these areas.

The views expressed in this *Insight* are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Scottish Executive or any other organisation(s) by whom the author(s) is or are employed.

Copyright © November 2003, Scottish Executive Education Department

ISSN 1478-6788 (Print)
ISSN 1478-6796 (Online)

Insight may be photocopied for use within your own institution.

A limited number of additional copies can be obtained from the Dissemination Officer, Research, Economic and Corporate Strategy Unit, Scottish Executive Education Department, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ (telephone 0131-244 0092). Copies of *Insight* and our other publications can also be downloaded from our website: www.scotland.gov.uk/insight/

Awards in Early Education, Childcare and Playwork: A Qualifications Framework for the Future

Carolyn Martin, Jennifer Wallace and Andrew Bell (Children in Scotland)

Introduction

Over recent years there has been growth in some areas of pre-school and childcare provision in Scotland, leading to the development of a more systematic and sustained expansion of provision in terms of both the number of places and diversity of types of provision. In addition to nurseries, nursery schools, playgroups and the services offered by childminders, services widely available now include out-of-school clubs and provision for very young children and their families.

The sector has coped with this rapid expansion alongside other changes, in particular the centralisation of registration and regulation and the Scottish Executive's commitment to integrating such services. These developments also require a trained, skilled workforce, with appropriate qualifications, and one that is appropriately recognised by the society it serves.

The aims of the study

In October 2002, Children in Scotland began a short study to explore the extent to which current awards and qualifications for the estimated 32,100-strong, predominantly part-time, female para-professional workforce in Scotland are appropriate to the needs of the sector in the context of change and adequate in terms of integration and quality agendas.

The study reviewed and analysed existing para-professional qualifications in early education, childcare and playwork but did not consider qualifications at teacher 'professional' level. It investigated whether the qualifications provided a clear framework that incorporates accepted progression, transference of knowledge and skills and introduces workforce flexibility; it considered how the qualifications are understood and accepted by employers and students; and it explored the extent to which the qualifications met the requirement to support integrated service delivery.

The central questions addressed by the research were

- How do the learning outcomes and performance criteria for the existing awards in early education, childcare and playwork relate to the standards and competencies required by the Care Commission and HMIE?
- What are the inter-relationships among existing awards relevant to childcare, early education and playwork and how do they articulate with higher education opportunities?
- How well do current awards equip holders to do their jobs and provide high quality care and education, particularly in relation to integrated service delivery?
- Are there gaps/overlaps in terms of the competencies as against the standards requirements of the Care Standards and the HMIE indicators?
- What would be the key topics for inclusion in a comprehensive broad-based qualification which met all necessary standards and presented a framework robust enough to accommodate changes to these in the future?

The approach

The fieldwork for this study included surveys and interviews to establish the views and perceptions of the sector on the current qualifications framework. The research was carried out with four distinct interest groups: training providers, childcare providers, current students/candidates and key stakeholders.

The study also involved the design and construction of a relational database to allow the content of the current awards in early education, childcare and playwork to be investigated against a set of 15 topics drawn from an analysis of the standards and quality indicators expressed in two key documents:

- The National Care Standards – Early Education and Childcare Up to the Age of 16 (National Care Standards Committee)
- The Child at the Centre (the Scottish Executive's guide to self-evaluation for those responsible for and working in early years settings).

The topics covered the key competence, knowledge and understanding requirements for effective working in the sector.

Key Findings

The current awards framework

How aware are you of the range of awards available in early education, childcare and playwork?

The current range of nationally recognised qualifications relevant to the sector is complex. It encompasses both competence-based awards such as the Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) assessed in the workplace and the more traditional college-based awards such as the Higher National Certificate (HNC), which are a mixture of practical competence assessed in a work placement and knowledge and understanding assessed in "the classroom".

In total, there are 13 awards or qualifications available for those working or aspiring to work in the sector at para-professional level. These are listed in table 2 below. In addition, there are a number of "Scottish Progression Awards" which provide an introduction to study in the sector though these are not considered here.

Purpose and content of the awards

To what extent do you think awards cover the same topic areas?

A breakdown of the mandatory content of the current awards against the 15 topics indicates some considerable areas of commonality across the awards as well as some significant areas of weakness. Table 1 shows the topics ranked according to the number of awards which cover them.

Table 1: Number of awards covering each key topic

Topic	Number of awards covering (total = 13)
Organisation of children and young people's play and learning	13
Safety	13
Organising and resourcing of the learning and care environment	12
Working with colleagues and other professionals	12
Growth and development of children and young people	10
Care and health of children and young people	10
Play and learning	10
Engaging with the child/young person	9
Support for children and families	9
Ethos of the setting	9
Monitoring & Evaluation	9
Working with parents	8
The child/young person in the community	4
Staffing and staff development	3
Service management	2

The mandatory components of the 13 awards examined offer common content across only two of the 15 topics:

- Organisation of children and young people's play and learning
- Safety.

If the SGA in Care at Intermediate 2 is omitted, the list increases to include:

- Organisation and resourcing of the learning and care environment
- Professional relationships.

Despite these variations there is a core purpose common to the awards, centring on working with children, safety and professional relationships. This core commonality will be important if consideration is to be given to how the current qualifications may be rationalised to create a more accessible framework for training that meets the developing demand for training.

In general the awards failed to cover management issues, though there are exceptions, with the SVQ in Early Years Care and Education (Level IV) and the SVQ (Level III) in Playwork both providing information on management and staffing and staff development. Similarly the child or young person in the community was poorly covered by such awards.

When individual awards were considered against the topic list some had particular omissions (see table 2). None of the awards covered all the key topics, though the SVQ Level IV covers all topics except the child / young person in the community.

Table 2: Number of key topics included in individual awards

Qualification	Number of topics covered (total = 15)
Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Early Years Care and Education (Level IV)	14
National Certificate (NC) Programme of Units in Childcare and Education	13
Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Childcare and Education	13
Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Playwork (Level III)	13
Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Early Years Care and Education (Level III)	12
Professional Development Award (PDA) in Childcare and Education	11
Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Early Years Care and Education (Level II)	11
Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Playwork (Level II)	11
Professional Development Award (PDA) in Support for Learning Assistants	10
Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Supporting Special Learning Needs	10
Higher National Diploma (HND) in Supporting Special Learning Needs	10
Professional Development Award (PDA) for Classroom Assistants	8
Scottish Group Award (SGA) in Care (Intermediate 2)	6

Understanding of the current awards amongst employers

Training providers and key stakeholders interviewed felt that childcare providers had a very poor understanding of the qualifications framework. Reasons given for this included:

In your experience, do employers understand the current awards structure?

- The complexity of the framework
- The language used in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) documents
- The confusing and bureaucratic process involved in dealings with the awards
- A perceived lack of consistency across awards, particularly in relation to PDAs
- Lack of readily available, good quality, impartial advice.

In contrast, only a minority of childcare providers reported poor understanding, with 69% stating that they either fully understood or mostly understood the qualifications framework.

Both stakeholders and training providers described a lack of faith amongst employers in the vocational qualifications. In particular, there seems to be a perception that the Level III Childcare and Education is not equal in value to the HNC, due to a perceived lack of theory in the vocational qualifications and issues related to consistency in the quality of delivery.

A small number of respondents held the view that the perception of vocational qualifications was beginning to change as more colleges began to deliver and promote them, encouraged by Scottish Executive funding through the Workforce Development initiative. This opinion is evidenced by the high number of staff in the childcare providers survey who are studying for Scottish Vocational Qualifications (55% of those currently studying).

The accessibility of training

How accessible are the current training opportunities and qualifications?

The majority of staff identified through the childcare providers survey (110 centres with 637 childcare staff) held a qualification relating to childcare (82%). The most commonly held qualification was the HNC in Childcare and Education (23%). In addition, there were substantial numbers of people in the sector currently undertaking award-focussed training, with training providers, on the whole, experiencing no difficulties in attracting students to courses in early education, childcare and playwork. Pre-entry qualification requirements are not seen as a barrier to accessing entry to awards programmes and many courses are on offer with no requirement for pre-entry qualifications.

The childcare providers questionnaire identified 209 staff out of a total of 637 (33%) who worked directly with children currently studying for childcare qualifications. Staff were most often working towards obtaining the SVQ Level II in Early Years Care and Education (30% of those currently studying) and the SVQ Level III in the same subject (25% of those currently studying).

There were a wide variety of modes of delivery employed by training providers, including part-time, full-time, flexible learning and distance learning. The most commonly accessed mode of delivery was part-time attendance, with 49% of courses offered on a part-time basis. The student survey suggested that people who were studying for a qualification found work/life balance hard to achieve when combining part-time study and work. Lack of time was the most common complaint from part-time candidates for awards. Students/candidates who are struggling to achieve work/life balance because of study need to be enabled to find modes of study that fit better with their other responsibilities. Although there was already a high degree of flexibility in modes of training delivery available, there was evidence to support developing better use of IT-based training with options for home-based study.

Balance between theory and practice in the awards

Do you think theory and practice are appropriately balanced in the awards?

Stakeholders, students and childcare providers felt that the theoretical aspects of awards equipped people sufficiently to deal with the practical elements of the work. Where there were concerns, particularly amongst childcare providers, these were, almost without exception, related to a desire to increase the practical elements of the awards.

Amongst stakeholders the concerns centred around the difficulty of assessing theory-based elements of the vocational qualifications in the workplace and the advantages,

even for vocational qualification candidates, of coming together to discuss theory and practice.

The practical component of childcare training involves a work experience placement. Half of the training providers interviewed described difficulties in organising placements and there was significant dissatisfaction amongst training providers in relation to the provision of support and guidance by those taking students on. The childcare providers themselves reported no difficulties in offering this, though they did feel that there was a lack of preparedness amongst the students they received on placements. The work experience placements were seen as providing positive benefits to childcare providers who valued the new ideas and improved understanding they brought to the workplace and the increased morale of the staff team.

Links between training providers and employers

Informal links with employers appeared plentiful, including relationships over placements, invitations to career days, invitations to address current students and sending newsletters to placement providers. However these links do not represent the full range of employers involved in the sector, nor do they enable a strategic approach to the development of local training opportunities. Training providers did not appear to be proactive in seeking formal links with employers, relying instead on opportunities provided through intermediary bodies such as the Childcare Partnerships.

Relationships between recruitment and retention of staff and access to appropriate training

A large number of issues were identified by interviewees in relation to recruitment and retention of staff, including low pay, lack of career progression, lack of training opportunities and low investment in the sector. The vast majority of the key stakeholders interviewed felt that increased training and qualifications were invaluable to the process of improving recruitment and retention of staff within the sector, due in part to the strong links between qualifications and pay.

Lack of opportunities for movement in the sector were linked to poor retention, as workers were receiving training and then moving out – for example into management or on to teacher education courses. Progression in the career structure and flexibility in the qualifications framework were seen as potentially very helpful.

Training was not perceived to be the whole answer to retention problems, although it was seen as making a contribution. Valuing and recognising trained staff and supporting continuous professional development for staff were seen as key to retention.

The issue of professional development was linked to the divisions between further education and higher education, with key stakeholders arguing for closer links between the two to provide increased flexibility and movement across the sector, along with greater status for their work and more clarity regarding career pathways and access to training.

The majority of training providers interviewed had formal articulation agreements with universities, where further education attainment can be credited to provide "advanced standing" entry to higher education programmes. All of these are for access to the BA in Early Childhood Studies degrees now offered by a range of universities. Even so, several training providers reported that universities were not recognising the HNC or the PDA Childcare and Education as qualifications credited towards entry requirements. There was

some questionir of the added value of such a degree to career progression since it appears that it does not currently provide automatic access to enhanced job opportunities.

Regulation and Quality

Standards and quality in the early years sector in Scotland are currently regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council (which regulates the social service workforce and their education and training) and the Care Commission (which regulates and inspects care services). As both of these organisations have been only recently established, the research also considered the impact they may have on regulation and quality.

Key stakeholders had a positive view of the long term impact of the Scottish Social Services Council on the sector. However, a surprising number of key stakeholders felt insufficiently informed of the work of the Council to give an opinion. Training providers complained too about the disbanding of the Early Years National Training Organisation (NTO) at the time of the fieldwork with nothing to replace it.

Childcare providers, as well as students in training, were not fully familiar with the requirements of the Care Commission (the Care Standards) and there was evidence to suggest the need for ongoing work with childcare providers in promoting understanding. Training providers were not particularly well informed about the Care Standards. A significant number had not incorporated the frameworks into teaching for awards. They felt that the awards (particularly the NC/HNC) had been written before the advent of the frameworks and were out of date. For childcare providers to properly appreciate and understand the frameworks it was suggested that they need to be covered explicitly in training.

The inspection process from the Care Commission was seen to hold the potential for being a developmental experience for childcare providers. The Care Standards are seen as being complementary to the development of integrated service delivery and therefore act as an impetus to a different kind of training which offers more holistic methods of working with children and families. However, the fieldwork suggested that the impact had apparently been slight due to poor communication between the Care Commission and training providers.

Development of the awards to meet future needs of the sector

How can the awards structure be developed in line with the needs of the sector?

Ideas for future development of qualifications were seen in terms of both content and delivery. Ideas for developments in content centred on a desire for greater practical work, particularly in placement and working with very young children. Ideas for developments in delivery centred on improving access, better information and better use of work-based staff for assessment. There was recognition amongst most key stakeholders that the training framework needs to address developments towards integrated services. Stakeholders stressed that training should take account of developments in family support, out-of-school care, childminding, working with children with additional needs and working with very young children.

Training providers regard the creation of simple and accessible pathways towards qualifications as a priority and the involvement of employers in any developments as being of central importance. Both stakeholders and training providers are receptive to the idea of a broad-based introductory award developed to meet the changing emphasis in service delivery. Key stakeholders and training providers were divided as to what could

be the purpose of an introductory award with two different options described by respondents:

- An initial qualification in its own right to provide entry to a large range of jobs in early education, childcare and playwork.
- A "taster" course to act as an introduction to working in the sector. This would not lead to direct access to employment but rather to helping people make properly informed choices.

The first option identified was favoured by 13 key stakeholders, compared to 7 arguing for the "taster" course model.

There was general agreement about the content of a broad-based award although training providers placed greater emphasis on core skills including IT, numeracy, literacy and inter-personal/social skills.

A number of stakeholders pointed to the potential of the emerging Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to clarify links between awards; allow comparison of levels of awards; allow transference by accreditation of prior learning; and make entry into Higher Education easier for those with appropriate Further Education or work-based qualifications.

Discussion and implications

What do you see as the policy implications of this research?

The research suggested that the current framework is inflexible, fragmented in its construct and with in-built barriers to transfer of knowledge and skills across the sector. It also seems that the current awards framework and many of the individual awards in it do not provide the highly mobile and broadly skilled workforce an integrated service will require. In relation to the **central questions** addressed in the research, evidence strongly suggests that:

- There is a variable relationship between the learning outcomes and performance criteria for the existing awards and the standards and competencies required by the Care Commission and the Child at the Centre. On the whole, SVQ awards relate quite well to these whilst others (particularly the PDA awards) are too narrowly job-specific in relation to the more holistic requirements and the integrated services imperative. Further to this, several awards fail to meet the requirements of the Care Standards and the Child at the Centre in a number of important respects.
- Inter-relationships among existing awards relevant to childcare, early education and playwork are confused and confusing. There is no formal system of accreditation of prior learning in place to allow ease of progression from one award to another. Articulation with higher education is problematic as there is little formal recognition by such institutions of the value of existing awards.
- Current awards vary in their ability to equip holders to provide high quality care and education, particularly in relation to integrated service delivery. Several awards are job-specific to the extent that they both limit the horizons of people doing them and are at odds with the more holistic and integrated agenda the sector has to face.

In relation to the purpose and aims of the research, we suggest that there is therefore a clear need to re-evaluate early years, childcare and playwork qualifications. Several of the respondents interviewed referred to the need to create a cohesive awards/qualifications framework that is comprehensive in terms of the emerging demands on the sector and associated needs. In exploring the possibilities for devising a

single, entry level para-professional qualification, the research team were able to suggest a number of possible ways forward. In the exploration of such an award it will be essential to consider how best to:

- Ensure that the framework has the scope to accommodate changing needs as these further develop in relation to integrated health, education and social work services.
- Create a continuum of awards from school-based qualifications through workplace and further education programmes to higher education in order to allow for progression, long term prospects and a consequent stabilisation and further professionalisation of the workforce, and to help promote a positive image of the sector as a career choice.
- Develop stronger and more dynamic working partnerships between training providers and employers so that the needs of the sector continue to inform the development of training and the knowledge, skills and expertise of practitioners are incorporated into the training experience for students/candidates.
- Reflect a practice-based approach to the construction of awards which maximises the value attached to experience in the workplace and resources workplaces to take on a significant role in training staff.
- Develop clear and accessible information on the awards framework and career opportunities in the sector.
- Consider how to develop a career structure for the sector that is reflective of the integrated nature of the work across early education, childcare and playwork.

In addition, while it is not within the brief of this research to consider qualifications at teacher 'professional' level, it is suggested that consideration be given to how this qualification should relate to those operating at 'professional' level.

Conclusion

Despite some shortcomings in the qualifications framework, this sector is extremely vibrant. It is also overwhelmingly positive about the opportunities and challenges the next few years will present.

The development of integrated children's services, particularly as they relate to early years, offers exciting opportunities to think about the real needs of children and families. The research indicates that, despite some reservations, there is a willingness to grasp these opportunities and exploit them.

References

Scottish Executive (1997) *The Child at the Centre: Self-Evaluation in the Early Years*, Edinburgh

Scottish Executive (2002) *Interchange 73: Early Education and Childcare Workforce Survey*, Edinburgh

Scottish Executive (2002) *Draft National Care Standards for Childcare Agencies: A Consultation Paper*

Scottish Executive (2003) *National Care Standards – Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16*

The *Insight* Series

1. *Classroom Assistants: Key Issues from the National Evaluation*
2. *The Impact of ICT Initiatives in Scottish Schools*
3. *Moving On to Primary 1: An Exploratory Study of the Experience of Transition from Pre-School to Primary*
4. *Accelerating Reading and Spelling with Synthetic Phonics: A Five Year Follow Up*
5. *Assessment of Benefits and Costs of Out of School Care*
6. *Meeting the Needs of Children from Birth to Three: Research Evidence and Implications for Out-of-Home Provision*
7. *Key Findings from the National Evaluation of the New Community Schools Pilot Programme in Scotland*
8. *Scottish Qualification for Headship: Key Issues from the Evaluation*
9. *The Sitter Service in Scotland: A Study of the Costs and Benefits*
10. *Awards in Early Education, Childcare and Playwork: A Qualifications Framework for the Future*

If you have views on *Insight* or wish to find out more about SEED's research and economics programme, please contact the Research, Economic and Corporate Strategy Unit, Scottish Executive Education Department, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ.

Astron 208504 10/03

This document is produced from 100% Elemental Chlorine-free material, environmentally preferred material and is 100% recyclable.

ISSN 1478-6788 (Print)
ISSN 1478-6796 (Online)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

X	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").

PA031705